

Submission by Mr Vince Connelly

Re: Future Foundations for Giving Draft Report

Philanthropy Inquiry

Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

9 February 2024

Commissioners,

I write with reference to the Draft Productivity Commission Report – Future Foundations for Giving, to express my personal views.

Against the criteria outlined for the review, the provision of DGR status for non-government educational institutions is absolutely achieving significant community benefits. Specifically, I note from the 'Key Points' section the intent of any reform to, "...direct support to where there is likely to be the greatest net benefits to the community". Private financial contributions towards infrastructure that assists in the education of Australian children must certainly be taken to be a significant community benefit.

My personal experience, along with my five siblings, was an education through the private Catholic school system. The financial contributions that my parents made through school fees and other donations, helped enable an environment where we could receive a high quality, professional education without the burden to other taxpayers accompanied by government school education.

My wife and I have put all three of our children through private education in the Catholic schooling system (with the exception of the final two years of our son's schooling, which occurred at a specialist college for leading arts students). Again, these contributions have helped alleviate the overall taxpayer responsibility to fund childhood education.

The removal of DGR status for non-government educational institutions would unnecessarily and materially threaten the survivability of many such providers. It would be a brave, and likely untrue assumption, that the government schooling system would be ready, willing and able to meet the resulting increased demand.

I urge that before committing to the removal of DGR status for non-government school building funds, the Commission:

- Gathers wide input from non-government school providers about likely impacts upon their finances and operational sustainability;

- Liaises with government schools to ascertain their capability to support an influx of students from non-government schools;
- Models the impact upon childhood education outcomes from the almost certain and significant transfer of students from private to public education;
- Model the financial impact to taxpayers from the removal (due to financial sustainability impacts) of many private education providers; and
- Report publicly on the outcomes of the above consultation and modelling.

Thank you for your consideration of mine and other submissions.

Your sincerely,

Vince Connelly